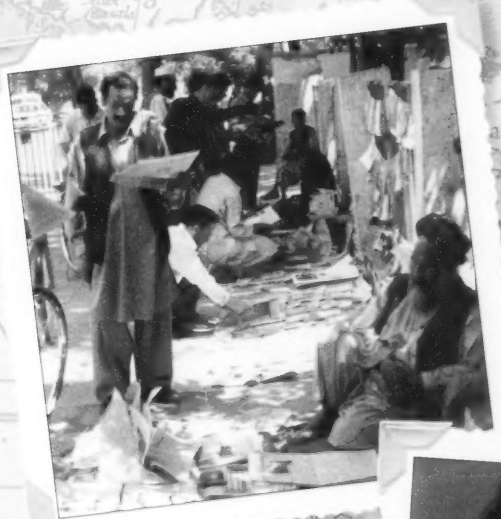
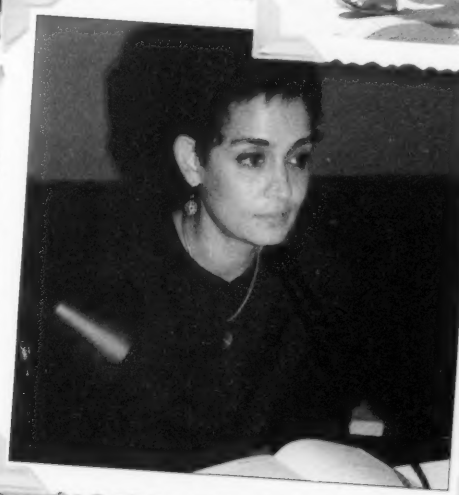
The LIBRARY *of* CONGRESS
Information Bulletin
Vol. 64, No. 5 May 2005

UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD

The Library's Operations Overseas





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JAMES H. BILLINGTON
Librarian of Congress

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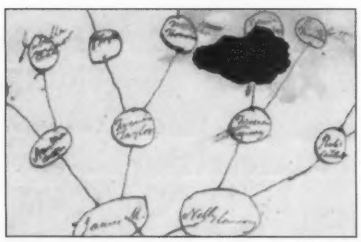

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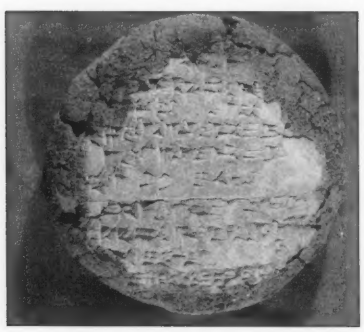

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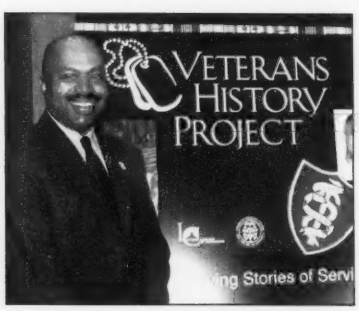

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On the Cover: From the buying, selling and trading of books to the collection and distribution of creativity worldwide, the Library's overseas operations help maintain its status as the world's premier library.

Cover Story: In its mission to serve Congress and the nation, the Library of Congress has always been keenly aware of the world of knowledge outside of America's borders. A network of overseas offices has served to increase the depth of acquisitions and understanding of that greater world. 107

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Note to Readers: Some issues of the Library of Congress Information Bulletin are being published out of sequence during calendar 2005 due to editorial and production considerations. We apologize for any inconvenience.

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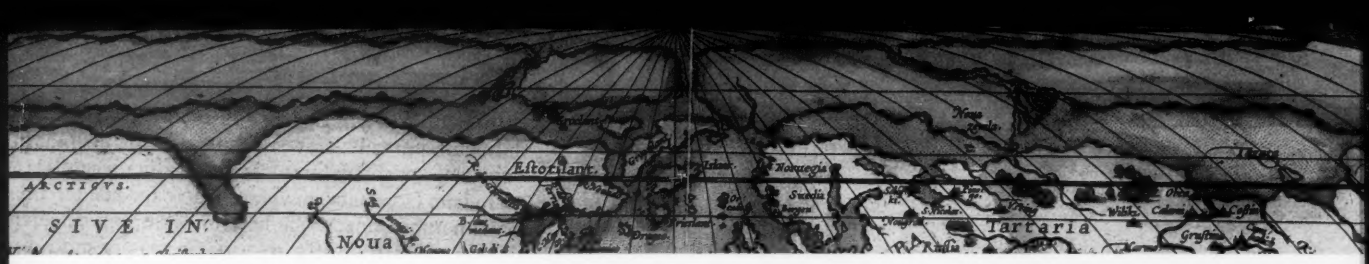
UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD

THE LIBRARY'S OPERATIONS OVERSEAS

BY CAROL MITCHELL AND JAMES ARMSTRONG

The Library of Congress, with support from the Association of Research Libraries and the American scholarly community, invested in the future of American foreign policy decision-making and scholarly research in 1962 when it opened the doors of the first overseas Library of Congress field offices. ✺ The offices were created in response to the changing intellectual, economic and political landscape following World War II.



America emerged from World War II as a world leader with its industry and political system intact, but it lacked the information resources needed to analyze and understand the rapidly changing geopolitical world as it emerged from decolonization and faced the Cold War. As early as 1944, librarians at America's leading academic libraries were developing proposals for the cooperative acquisition of foreign publications needed to support the nascent university area studies programs.

UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD

Seeking broader government support, librarians with the Association of Research Libraries approached the Library of Congress to seek their assistance with the acquisition of foreign publications. Efforts to expand coverage of world publishing eventually took advantage of existing U.S. earnings of foreign currencies through the sale of agricultural commodities, under the Agricultural Trade and Development Assistance Act of 1954, or PL-480. Enacted in 1958 on the initiative of Rep. John D. Dingell, the law authorized the Librarian of Congress to finance "the acquisition of books, periodicals and other materials ... of cultural or educational significance ... and the deposit thereof in libraries and research centers in the United States specializing in the areas to which they relate." In addition to supporting the Library of Congress' own collections, PL-480 has provided the intellectual foundation for dozens of libraries and research centers in the United States.

Today there are six overseas offices — in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), Cairo (Egypt), Jakarta (Indonesia), New Delhi (India), Nairobi (Kenya) and Islamabad (Pakistan) — each of which covers a broad region. The overseas offices have a presence on the Library's Web site at **www.loc.gov/acq/ovop/**. Although much has changed in 43 years, these regional offices continue to collect and catalog materials from 86 countries in some 150 languages and 25 scripts, from Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Stretching across the globe, at least one of the offices is open for business at any given hour, collecting publications in any language that fulfills the mission of the Library of Congress "to sustain and preserve a universal collection of knowledge and creativity for future generations." Throughout this period, the overseas operations of the Library of Congress have adapted to meet changing legal, administrative and budgetary fluctuations and the seismic shifts of globalization and sociopolitical change.

Collecting for the Future of America

An extensive network of overseas offices emerged during the next two decades. The first offices were established in Cairo, New Delhi and Karachi (Pakistan). Tel Aviv (Israel) and Jakarta were added in 1963, with Belgrade (Yugoslavia) following in 1966 and Colombo (then Ceylon, now Sri Lanka) in 1967.

KABUL—Magazine and booksellers are a common sight on the streets of Afghanistan's capital, as well as in other cities in central Asia. This vendor has set up shop on the sidewalk outside the Kabul public library.

The number expanded under the National Program for Acquisitions and Cataloging (NPAC) authorized by the Higher Education Act of 1965, and the offices in Rio de Janeiro and Nairobi were opened in 1966. Fiscal exigencies of the 1970s forced the closure of the offices in Israel, Yugoslavia and Ceylon (today Sri Lanka is covered by the New Delhi Office). As PL-480 funds were exhausted, existing offices obtained additional funding through the Cooperative Acquisitions Program (CAP), under which participating libraries contribute funds for the acquisition of their materials, plus an administrative charge, on a cost-recovery basis. CAP continues to attract support from the research library community. Today 105 libraries, including institutions from Canada, Japan, Pakistan, Germany and Sri Lanka, participate in at least one, and often more than one, Cooperative Acquisitions Program, acquiring roughly 400,000-600,000 pieces per year.

With an estimated shipment of some 65 million items sent to the Library of Congress and participating institutions since 1962, the development and growth of the Library of Congress' overseas programs supported and, in turn, were supported by the growing academic field of area studies. CAP publications have provided a generation of scholars with reading materials for language learners from Arabic to Urdu. Ethnomusicologists have listened to countless cassettes and CDs as they prepare for field research. Political scientists and historians have consulted reels of microfilmed newspapers assessing emerging political trends, while economists and

population scientists have turned to the tremendous store of statistical and census data from around the world.

The breadth of materials acquired by the overseas offices is impressive: journals, books, newspapers, pamphlets, music and compact discs, videocassettes (documentaries, feature films and television), DVDs, maps, gazettes, posters, spoken recordings, musical recordings, government publications, conference proceedings, children's literature and other formats that may be unique to a region, such as the illustrated palm leaves from Bali or the "cordel literature" (chapbooks displayed on strings in markets) from Brazil. Today the offices are also tracking the growth of subscription databases, free Internet resources, digital maps and other born digital materials.

An important part of what the offices collect is considered gray literature (documentary material that is not commercially available), which cannot be obtained through regular book suppliers. To collect these widely scattered resources, overseas office librarians take acquisitions trips; write letters to political organizations, academic institutions and cultural agencies; attend book fairs; visit governmental agencies, NGOs (non-governmental organizations) and neighborhood bookshops; meet with authors and literary society members; and, more recently, browse the Internet.

The impact of the Internet has been both positive and negative. Librarians enjoy increased access to information about government offices, political movements and parties and NGOs. Unfortunately, this comes at a cost, for many of these groups have turned to publishing exclusively on the Internet which is inherently more ephemeral, and the acquisition of born digital materials is far more problematic.

Bibliographic Control and Access

In order to improve bibliographic access to foreign publications that were being added to its collections, the Library of Congress overseas offices were authorized funds under the Higher Education Act of 1965 (NPAC) to provide preliminary bibliographic control over the materials they had acquired. Over the years full cataloging responsibility has been increasingly shifted to the regions where there was language and subject expertise.

Beacher Wiggins, responsible for both acquisitions and cataloging in the Library's Acquisitions and Bibliographic Access Directorate, states that "the expansion of cataloging responsibility in the overseas offices is one of our directorate's goals. Eventually our offices will be processing all the materials they acquire to the final levels of processing required."

The original cataloging done by the foreign national staff must meet the same requirements as that produced by catalogers in Washington. It can take several years for overseas staff to master the many complex components of cataloging that are required—ranging from MARC 21 (Machine Readable Cataloging standards) to the specific subject headings most appropriate for their regions' publications.

An initial byproduct of the acquisitions and cataloging work of the overseas offices was the publication of Accessions Lists. In the absence of national bibliographies, these monthly publications quickly became essential acquisitions tools and achieved a wide distribution both in the United States and abroad. They proved to be an invaluable tool for the discovery of local publications. The advent of the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) and the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN), which provided improved bibliographic control and access, combined with fiscal constraints, eventually led to the discontinuation of the lists. The exception was the Nairobi office, which continues to publish the African list along with a Quarterly Index to African Periodical Literature, now published electronically at **http://memory.loc.gov/misc/qsihtml/**, which provides unrivaled access to this literature.

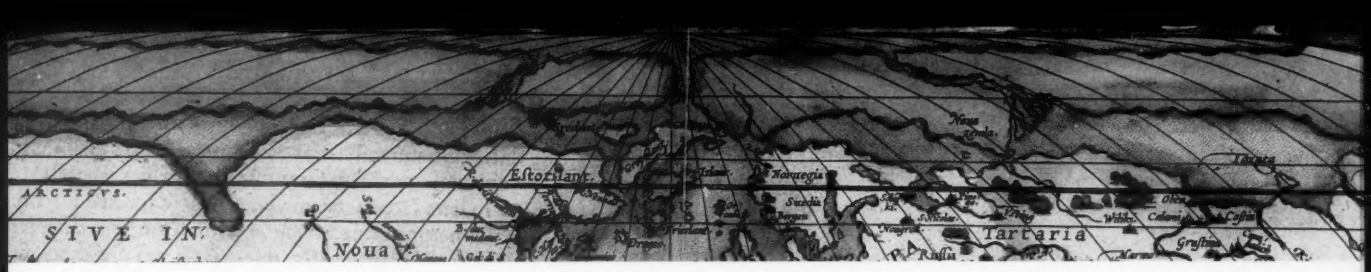
Organization of Overseas Offices

An overseas office is staffed by an American field director and locally hired staff members who are librarians, library technicians, automation specialists, microfilm experts, accountants and general office staff. Highly educated, with library and other specialist skills, local staffs are given a thorough introduction to the unique systems, collections and policies of the Library of Congress. Training and mentoring are vital parts of the daily routine, because of the requirements of the Library of Congress in terms of collection development and bibliographic control. The contribution of these expert local staff cannot be overstated. Their knowledge of local publishing, their linguistic skills and their cataloging expertise keep the offices abreast of the ceaseless flow of publications.

Managing from Afar

Field directors are recruited from the Library of Congress staff in Washington as well as from outside the Library. Directors' careers vary; they may have experience in cataloging, acquisitions or area studies. Rotation from post to post is a feature of the program, with many directors having served at more than a single post. The benefits of moving to another overseas office are considerable, with experience gained at one post transferred to another. Prior foreign language training is not required, but most directors know, or subsequently acquire, relevant local languages.

PESHAWAR—A bookseller offers his wares from a pushcart in this city in Pakistan.



WASHINGTON, D.C.—Pamela Howard-Reguindin, field director of the Library's Rio office, talks with Ram Saran Wadhwa (New Delhi), Bakhshish Ellahi (Islamabad), Rajesh Arya (New Delhi) and Rabab El Din (Cairo) at the opening reception of the 2005 Field Directors Conference at the Library.

Administratively, the overseas offices (and their suboffices) are attached to the U.S. embassies in the countries where they are based. The embassy affiliation provides a variety of administrative support services, including access to the diplomatic pouch and military mail, where available, which ensures that materials are delivered safely and securely to the Library and participating institutions. Because the Library of Congress overseas offices are part of the legislative, and not the executive, branch, they tend to operate behind the scenes of embassy life, collecting and documenting the host country's cultural and political life. However, the staff of each office takes advantage of the ample opportunities to participate in the literary and cultural life of their respective region.

The overseas offices are managed from Washington by the Library's African/Asian Acquisitions and Overseas Operations Division (AFA/OVOP). Lygia Ballantyne, the acting chief, is assisted by expert staff members, who act as facilitators with the overseas offices, various divisions within the Library and the State Department. Fehl Cannon and Fred Protopappas currently serve as facilitators and provide day-to-day guidance. The division also provides overseas offices support services in information technology and telecommunications.

From time to time, members of Congress and their staffs traveling abroad meet with an overseas office staff. In 2004 Rep. Bob Ney, chairman of the Committee on House Administration, met with Field Director James N. Gentner during his visit to Cairo.

"We prize the opportunity to meet face-to-face with our primary clients, the members of Congress and their staffs, to learn more about their information needs," said Ballantyne. "And we make a point of sitting down with the Library's Congressional Research Service (CRS) specialists interested in the countries we cover every time a field director comes to Washington for consultations."

Field Directors Conference

Field directors meet periodically in Washington to exchange ideas with their Library of Congress colleagues, receive training in new fiscal or cataloging systems and learn more about the current acquisitions needs both of the Library of Congress and of participating libraries around the country.

The 16th Field Directors Conference was held at the end of May this year, and over a two-week period it covered such topics as training in Momentum, the Library's new fiscal management system; the introduction of new Integrated Library System (ILS) modules for acquisitions, cataloging and Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC); expansion of cataloging in the overseas offices; management requirements and reports; communications with colleagues at the Library; new digital initiatives; and collection development and collaborations.

At the daylong session devoted to collection development and collaborations, a number of speakers discussed the importance of the overseas offices for maintaining their collections. Said Angel Batiste, recommending officer for Africana publications, "The field office is the most effective channel to meet our acquisitions needs," and that "more than ever, [there is a] need to publicize collections and make acquisitions known to our users."

Georgette Dorn, chief of the Hispanic Division at the Library of Congress, stressed the importance of collecting nontraditional materials, especially audio and video, and trying to capture more e-journals from countries like Brazil and Uruguay.

Armenian specialist Levon Avdoyan said, "it is vital to continue the close cooperation between recommending officers onsite [at the Library of Congress] and overseas operations specialist staff." Ballantyne agreed, saying that they were discussing the need for better communication among the overseas offices as well as to and from the Library.

Dan Hazen, collection development officer at Harvard University, raised the issue whether the Library of Congress, as a government institution, could work as effectively in some countries as nonpublic agents could. Ballantyne responded that the Library has a long record as a large buyer of publications, and its activities are well known and valued. James C. Armstrong, field director in Jakarta, agreed, saying that other countries recognize that the Library has a valid role to play.

Speakers from the Federal Research Division, CRS, the Law Library and the Science, Technology and Business Divi-

ISLAMABAD—At left, Will Tuchrello, field director of the Islamabad office, with Rukhsana Saood, senior staff member. At right, most of the staff in the Library's overseas offices are foreign nationals, who perform a variety of tasks, from acquiring materials to cataloging and helping to preserve them. Surrounded by recently acquired materials, Nuzhat Rahman, head of acquisitions for the Islamabad office, reviews incoming acquisitions receipts.

sion all emphasized how much they rely on the acquisitions of the overseas offices and how important those materials are to their users. They also stressed the need for current materials to be provided on a timely basis, especially in digital formats. "Keep us informed about what is new and important," urged Robert Worden, chief of the Federal Research Division.

Preserving for the Future

Preservation is central to the work of the offices, because many of the materials they acquire are published with substandard paper that is highly acidic, in bindings that would not tolerate the stress of normal photocopying.

Preservation microfilming activities began in New Delhi in 1966 and 12 years later in Jakarta. They maintain extensive facilities for producing microfiche or microfilm documents with several cameras in operation at each site. The two offices produce thousands of fiche and microfilm reels per year that are sent to the Library of Congress for permanent storage. The New Delhi office reformats for preservation materials from other offices as well, ensuring that important newspapers and gazettes from its own region and from Cairo, Islamabad and Nairobi are preserved for future reference. The Jakarta office is responsible for preservation reformatting of materials from Southeast Asia.

Although the emphasis is on preserving current materials, the offices engage in local cooperative projects that ensure access to older, rare and unique materials. Collaborative projects, such as the Government of India-Library of Congress project to preserve microfilm titles listed in "The National Bibliography of Indian Literature," not only preserve cultural heritage but also promote positive cultural relations between the Library of Congress and host countries. In Brazil, the Rio office coordinates with its national library to film several current newspapers; the Library of Congress supplies the film, the national library, the labor. Preservation efforts have proved successful, adding thousands of foreign newspapers, as well as materials reflecting regional interests, to the collections of the nation's libraries.

In 2002 the New Delhi office preserved regional newspapers and ephemera that included important Pakistani and Taliban materials reflecting South Asian perspectives on 9/11 and the war on terrorism.

Over the past few years, the offices have begun to review scanning technologies that will improve the timely delivery of information to CRS and other Library divisions. Newly published documents are scanned as PDF files and e-mailed to the requesting division. Instead of waiting weeks, CRS or the Law Library will have the information they need the next day. In 2004 the New Delhi office purchased a high-speed scanner that reads and transfers fiche or film images to digital images. The New Delhi office plans to experiment with transferring more information in electronic format to key library staff and to CRS so they can keep abreast of events and opinions from the region. "We are engaging in a cross-offices effort to better organize and deliver current materials of immediate interest to our clients using digital technologies," said Ballantyne.

Closing the Gap: Communication, Technology and the Overseas Office

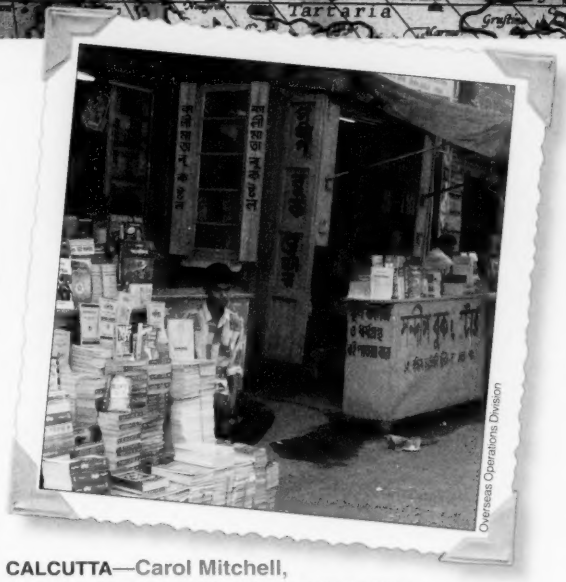
New technologies ushered in an era of global information and rapid exchange of ideas. These ever-evolving technologies altered the manner in which the offices conduct their business and continue to shape acquisitions, bibliographic access, and service to Congress. When the offices first opened, directors communicated with Washington and participants via typed airmail letters. Until the 1980s, international telephone calls were rare and expensive. With the turnaround time for a request for information sometimes taking weeks, directors were often forced to make decisions with little guidance from Washington. The introduction of the telex machine brought Washington and participants closer to the overseas offices.

The 1990s technology revolution brought by improved telecommunications and desktop computers has had a profound impact on the operations of the overseas offices, enabling them to undertake far more ambitious tasks in acquisitions, cataloging, participant programs, cost accounting and reporting.

Although each office operates in a different cultural context, the technologies they apply are increasingly similar. All of the offices now maintain informative general public Internet sites (**www.loc.gov/acq/ovop/**) as well as secure Internet sites for their participants. As technology evolves, allowing faster and greater communication links, the offices are increasingly integrated into business operations at the Library in Washington. The most radical demonstration of this integration began in March 2005 when the catalogers in the overseas offices began to enter their bibliographic data directly into the Library's Integrated Library System (ILS).

As the offices expanded their Internet services and communications links with Washington, they faced new problems keeping the Library's elaborate computing facilities free from hackers, spam, trojans and other intrusions. Over the past few years, the offices have worked closely with Washington to develop extensive computer and Internet security measures, allowing increased access to the Library's electronic resources through the use of Virtual Private Networks (VPN).

Anton R. Pierce, who provides expertise and technical support to the IT staff in the overseas offices from the AFA/OVOP office in Washington, commented: "The rate of technological change in the offices is exponential. The change affects all areas of day-to-day operations and is manifested in several technical arenas. The past five years have seen the proliferation of competent technical infrastructure in most of the areas where the offices are located. This was far from the case a few years ago when there were no reliable Internet Service Providers (ISPs), no reliable telephone services—let alone reliable telecommunications services—few affordable local PC level suppliers and maintenance services. Now all that has changed, permitting the offices to, in many ways, appear as if they were just 'down the street.'"



CALCUTTA—Carol Mitchell, deputy director of the New Delhi office, visited a number of sidewalk book vendors in Calcutta on an acquisitions trip earlier in the year.

Office Profile: Cairo

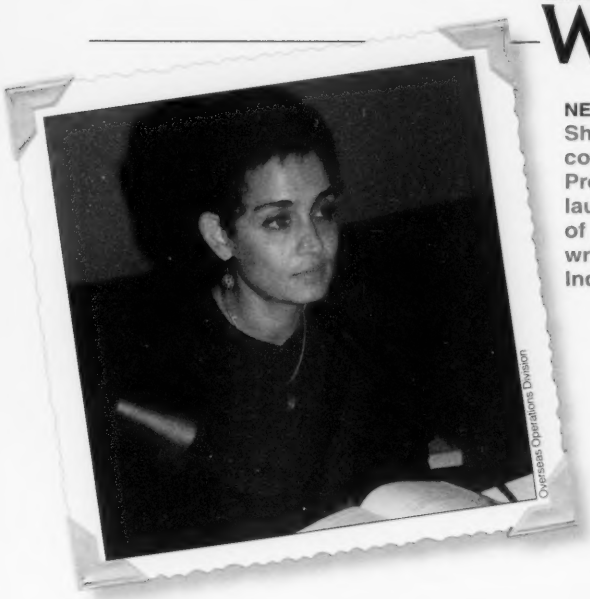
Even knowledgeable visitors to the overseas offices are struck by the wealth of materials that flows through them. Cairo, one of the three offices to begin operations in January 1962 under PL-480, collects materials from 24 countries stretching from Mauritania across Northern Africa through the Middle East, including Iraq, then south to Sudan and north to Turkey. The 30 Egyptian employees are not unfamiliar with political turmoil, and after the outbreak of the 1967 war they had to work under the supervision of directors based in Karachi or Nairobi. Now under the direction of James N. Gentner, the staff works to secure up-to-date documentation from all perspectives to enable Congress and the American public to make more informed decisions.

Since early 2003 when the United Nations sanctions were lifted on the importation of material from Iraq, the Cairo office has worked with dealers in Jordan and Lebanon to acquire current and retrospective Iraqi imprints. They acquired a complete run, for example, of the Iraqi Official Gazette from 1958 through 1996, which is available on CD-ROM.

The book vendor in Baghdad that the Library of Congress had been dealing with for more than 30 years before the sanctions were imposed contacted the office once the sanctions were removed to say that not only was he still in business, but he had been collecting materials for the Library throughout the boycott years and was ready to do business once again.

Office Profile: New Delhi

The New Delhi office also opened in 1962, originally as the American Libraries Book Procurement Center. Its current director, Laila Mulgaokar, and Deputy Director Carol L.



NEW DELHI—Author Arundhati Roy, who was born at Shillong, Meghalaya, is one of the authors who has contributed to the South Asian Literary Recordings Project (www.loc.gov/acq/ovop/delhi/salrp/), which was launched in April 2000 and has recorded the voices of prominent South Asian poets, novelists and playwrights representing more than 15 of the languages of India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

CALCUTTA—A ricksha transports boxes of books that Carol Mitchell purchased during her acquisitions trip to that city.

Mitchell, one of the authors of this article, manage the largest overseas office with a staff of 91. Highly skilled acquisitions and serial staff seek out publications in all languages from India. Sub-offices in Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal and Sri Lanka supply publications in their nations' languages to New Delhi, where they are processed. The New Delhi office uses an extensive network of local dealers to ensure coverage of India, a culturally and politically diverse country. Their activities are supplemented by acquisitions trips undertaken by New Delhi staff and management. The cataloging staff ensures that all of the materials selected for the collections are represented in the Library's online public catalog prior to reaching the Library's shelves. With six cameras operating most of the time, microfilm staff is kept busy collating, filming and processing reels of film and sheets of fiche for the Preservation Reformatting Division.

In 2000 the office took advantage of the Library of Congress Bicentennial to launch a project to record prominent regional authors reading from their own works. Under the leadership of the former director, Lygia Ballantyne, the staff recorded more than 100 authors and posted them online. Known as the South Asian Literary Recordings Project, the readings, along with brief biographical information, were made available in 2002 on the office's official site on the Web at **www.loc.gov/acq/ovop/delhi/salrp/**. This became one of the most frequently visited sites on the loc.gov domain, according to statistics kept by the Library.

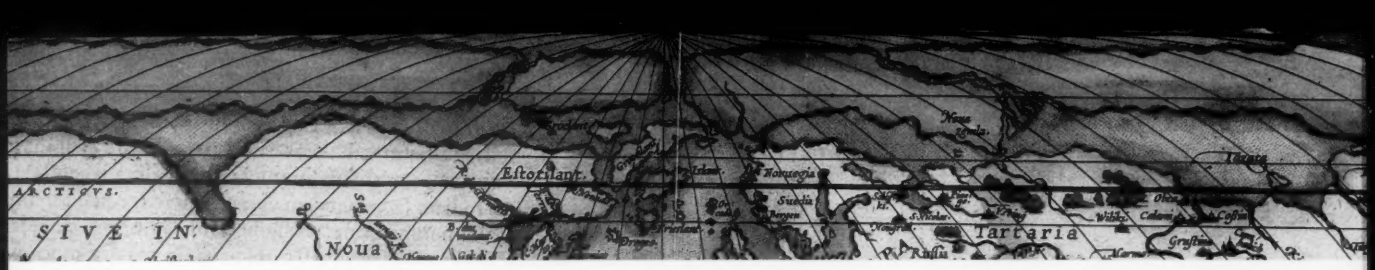
Office Profile: Islamabad

The Pakistan office was the third of the trio of offices that opened with the initial thrust of the PL-480 program. It began as part of the New Delhi office in Karachi and became autonomous in 1965. Increasing security concerns led to the transfer of the office to the capital, Islamabad, in 1995. Since 2001 the Islamabad office has expanded its role in acquiring up-to-date information about Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran, and providing assistance to the Library in Washington for exchanges with selected Central Asian countries.

Will Tuchrello, the director, faces many challenges, not the least of which are the security and safety of his staff in a volatile region. He works primarily out of the New Delhi office and visits Islamabad every few weeks. Although the number of staff declined to 22 with the move to the capital, the office doubled its monographic collecting from 1994 levels. In spite of the political turmoil, the staff continues to collect important religious materials, political memoirs and nonbook format materials from prominent religious and political groups. They also track the revival of publishing in Afghanistan and the opening of the Afghanistan participant program in 2004.

Nuzhat Rahman, head of acquisitions, writes: "At the moment, for the Islamabad office, the most important service is acquisition of hard-to-get so-called religious and political material published by radical and/or banned organizations [so that] the world ruling powers have knowledge of what goes on in the minds of those whom they are confronting."

She cited, as examples of some of the most unusual or unique publications recently acquired by the office, a decree issued by the Mullahs of Afghanistan to kill any Afghan siding with Americans and scores of CDs about Taliban and al-Qaida training camps.



Acquisitions librarian Sadia Fuwad, when asked what she would like her colleagues in the library world to understand about the activities of the Library's overseas offices, responded: "In our part of the region we want the library world to understand that we are not promoting American foreign policy but only preserving the vast amount of information that will get lost if we don't proactively collect and preserve it. It is not only beneficial for this generation but for the future generations to come."

Because of Congress' increased interest in Iran, the office has recently concentrated on improving the Library's holdings of Iranian materials and responding to the need for greater information on Islam and Islamic education in the region. Working with the New Delhi office, acquisitions staff collected ephemera and texts that highlight the issues and concerns of the Muslim community in the region. Of great interest to CRS and the Library's Federal Research Division are political and legal documents, such as Afghanistan's official publications and maps, national and local gazettes from Pakistan and current journals that are sympathetic to the Taliban.

Office Profile: Jakarta

Established in 1963, the Jakarta office was instrumental in collecting local and national government documents documenting the Sukarno years that have since proven invaluable, as Americans seek to understand the ethnic and religious dynamics of the region. The field director, James C. Armstrong, one of the authors of this article, oversees 48 staff, including

PESHAWAR—The Kabul book representative stores the materials he has gathered for the Library at his home in Peshawar until they can be delivered to the Islamabad office.

those working in the sub-offices in Bangkok (Thailand), Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) and Manila (Philippines). The office is responsible for all of the member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), with the exception of Myanmar, which is covered by New Delhi.

"A typical day for the Jakarta field director," says Armstrong, "begins with a short 10-12 minute commute from home to office, with times and routes changed daily to deter potential terrorists. [The office is located in a converted house in Menteng and is not co-located with the American Embassy.] On Wednesdays at 0830, there is an obligatory country team meeting, chaired by the ambassador, to attend at the embassy, where the embassy's current business is discussed. This forms a major conduit for keeping au courant with the manifold issues and activities going on at the embassy. ... In the afternoons, daily at 2 p.m., there is a selection meeting with the head of acquisitions, accompanied by a book-truck-full of publications, to be examined, discussed and selected or rejected for the Library and its participant libraries, whose requirements may vary.

"The Internet has profoundly affected many aspects of our work," he adds. "E-mail, statistical and financial reporting, transmission of cataloging data, daily press summaries. ... Its impact cannot be overstated."

Having an office that covers Southeast Asia enabled the Library of Congress to document the unfolding events in East Timor that culminated in the creation of the world's newest nation in 2002, Timor-Leste. More recently the office documented the state of libraries and the destruction of historical archives in the wake of the December 2004 tsunami that struck Indonesia.

In addition to its regular work of collecting and cataloging materials in more than 50 languages, the staff is engaged in a long-term project to preserve the personal collection of Pramoedya Ananta Toer. The office staff is working closely with the Toer family to document and preserve the literary opus of this leading Indonesian writer, who was imprisoned under the Suharto regime and more recently has been the target of militant religious groups.

Office Profile: Rio de Janeiro

The Rio de Janeiro office was established in 1966 as part of the expansion under NPAC. Its staff of 16 collects and catalogs materials from Brazil, French Guiana, Guyana, Suriname and Uruguay. Much of their time is spent maintaining an extensive exchange program that brings in thousands of elusive materials that would otherwise be lost to the American public.

The office, under the direction of Pamela Howard-Reguindin, has a long tradition of taking an active role in the documentation and preservation of Brazilian political and social history. For many years the Rio office has produced the Brazil Popular Groups (BPG) microfilm set, which documents issues important to the study of marginalized and disenfranchised sectors of the population. Building on this initiative, Howard-Reguindin used video to document the lives of five seasoned leaders of the African-Brazilian political

QUETTA—A Taliban reader in a bookshop in Quetta, Pakistan

RIO DE JANEIRO—Hanne Kristofferson reviews new purchases at the Library's Rio office.

movement. This complemented a missionwide conference co-sponsored by the Consulate and Department of State's Public Affairs Section dealing with racial issues in Brazil .

The Rio office has been a testing ground for the Library's Voyager ILS connection for cataloging. Rio staff members were the first to work with a direct connection to the ILS cataloging database in Washington. Serials staff check journals acquired by the office directly into the database, resulting in improved and more up-do-date serial records in the online catalog.

Office Profile: Nairobi

Like Rio, the Nairobi office opened its doors in 1966 as part of NPAC. Now housed in the newly built U.S. Embassy, the office is responsible for 22 countries in Eastern Africa and the Western Indian Ocean, from Ethiopia in the Northeast to Lesotho in Southern Africa. Acquiring materials in an area beset by drought, political upheaval and AIDS is a challenge to the office's 25 employees, who rely on frequent acquisitions trips and a network of acquisitions agents to ensure coverage of the region.

Paul Steere, the field director, continues a long tradition of ensuring high quality bibliographic access to these scarce resources. Recognizing the need to provide scholars with a tool to discover articles in the scattered periodical literature of the region, the office inaugurated the Quarterly Index to Africana Periodical Literature. This periodical index to articles in more than 300 journals is now available free to scholars throughout the world on the Internet at **http://memory.loc.gov/misc/qsihtml/**. Given the state of these impoverished economies with few publishers, and even fewer sophisticated information providers, there are few other resources to help scholars learn of new publications and information.

The Mission Remains: The Methods Are Changing

The primary mission of the Library of Congress' overseas operations remains to collect comprehensive sets of government publications at the national and state levels; commercial and academic books and journals of research value; publications of nongovernmental organizations, institutions, think tanks and political parties; and materials that document the literary and cultural trends within a region. The overseas offices continue to make these publications readily available to Congress and the American public through their efforts to catalog, index and ship (as well as digitally transmit) the myriad resources they acquire.

Although challenged by new developments in technologies, political upheaval, sudden shifts in an economy, or even natural disasters, the overseas offices continue to evolve, carrying out their mission of bringing information, opinions, cultural perspectives, history and knowledge to Congress and the American public. The offices are expanding their acquisitions activities to include new formats, and they continually seek new ways to provide bibliographic access as well as to deliver these valuable foreign resources. Their mission, however, remains constant: to serve Congress and the nation.

Librarian of Congress James H. Billington has described the recent information explosion as "the greatest upheaval in the transmission of knowledge since the invention of the printing press." The need to build and preserve universal collections of knowledge and creative works in all formats has never been more urgent. As outposts for the Library of Congress, the overseas offices serve as a model for library development while promoting efforts to advance the value and capabilities of libraries and archives worldwide. ◆

Carol Mitchell is the deputy director of the New Delhi office, and James Armstrong is the director of the Jakarta office. Pamela-Howard Reguindin, director of the Rio office, and other overseas offices staff members contributed to this article. Helen Dalrymple reported on the 16th Field Directors conference in Washington.

New Face of an Old Favorite

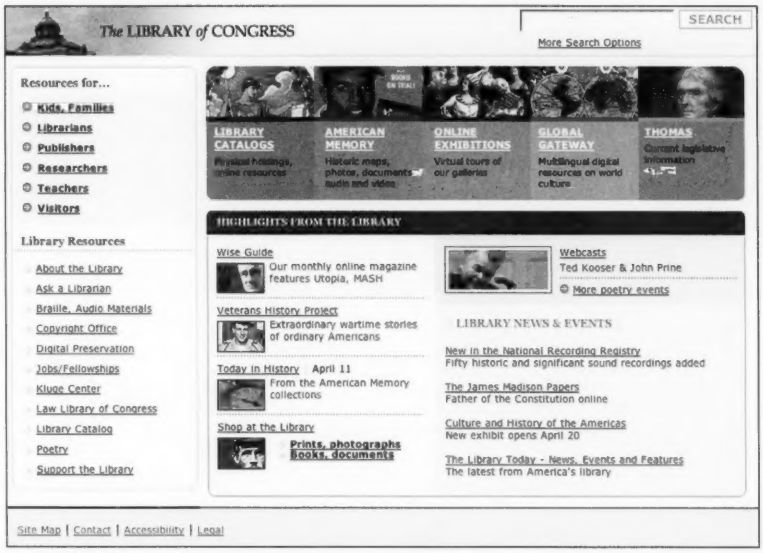
Library Updates Web Pages for Look, Ease of Use

By JOHN SAYERS

A new look and feel for the top-level pages of the Library's Web site was evident to users when they signed on at **www.loc.gov** on April 19, the day that the Library launched an upgrade of major portions of its site.

In an announcement to Library managers, Chief of Staff Jo Ann Jenkins said that she initiated the project to address comments and concerns of users—including members of Congress—that the site appeared dated and suffered in comparison with the best government and commercial Web sites.

Along with the main home page, a newly overhauled section featuring webcasts of lectures and symposia, a new giving/development site and a section about poetry programs and collections at the Library were launched. "The Library Today" news and events page and "About the Library" also have new looks.



The Library's new home page at www.loc.gov has been reorganized, streamlined and made more useful to its audiences.

Most notably, new pages designed specifically for key Library audiences—kids and families, librarians, publishers, researchers, teachers and visitors—have been created. These sites add new features, links and functionality to their predecessors and include consistent navigation to make it easier for users to find what they want on the site.

All of the new sections were retooled for ease of use and operational consistency, and all are compatible with the federal Section 508 standards for accessibility (including the new "Accessibility" section). The team assembled to implement the upgrade included Library of Congress staff with extensive experience in library sciences, information architecture, human factors, audience analysis, graphic design and communications.

The project was coordinated by the Web Services Division of the Office of Strategic Initiatives along with the Public Affairs Office.

Although this upgrade includes only a few critical top-level pages, the Library is developing requirements for a comprehensive overhaul of the its entire public Web presence, as well as providing oversight of the Library's internal Web sites designed for all staff. ◆

The LIBRARY of CONGRESS WEBCASTS
Webcasts Pages
SEARCH
More Search Options
Webcasts Home
Browse:
Biography, History
Culture, Performing Arts
Education
Government, World Affairs
Poetry, Literature
Religion
Science, Technology
How to View Webcasts
More Audio, Video Resources at the Library
Motion Pictures in American Memory
Motion Picture, Television Reading Room
Sound Recordings from the Library Shop
Featured Webcast
TITLE: Ted Kooser Interviews John Prine
SPEAKER: Ted Kooser and John Prine
EVENT DATE: March 9, 2005
RUNNING TIME: to come
PLAY
10 Most Popular Webcasts
Eisner Interview
Interview with Tory Dent
Mesa Verde
W. Mosely: Bookfest 01 pt. 2
Mission to Baghdad
First Words in Print
Richard Peck: Bookfest 04
A Tale of Two Gardens
Peter Straub: Bookfest 04
Blind Boys of Alabama II
Recently Added Webcasts
The History of Household Technology with Constance Carter
Fernando Henrique Cardoso on the Need for Global Democratic Governance
Managing Knowledge and Creativity in a Digital Context
The John W. Kluge Center at the Library of Congress presented a series of evening lectures on "Managing Knowledge and Creativity in a Digital Context," featuring some of the best-known experts in digitally networked communications. This series ran from November 2004 through March 2005 and aired live on C-SPAN.
View a list of webcasts from the Kluge Center
Visit the Kluge Center
Site Map | Contact | Accessibility | Legal

Users around the world may view from their computers many of the events and lectures held at the Library in Washington.

The James Madison Papers

Collection on Fourth U.S. President Goes Online

The James Madison Papers, one of 23 presidential collections held by the Library of Congress, are now available online in the American Memory Web site at **http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/madison_papers/**. This site now offers more than 10 million items from the collections of the Library of Congress and other repositories.

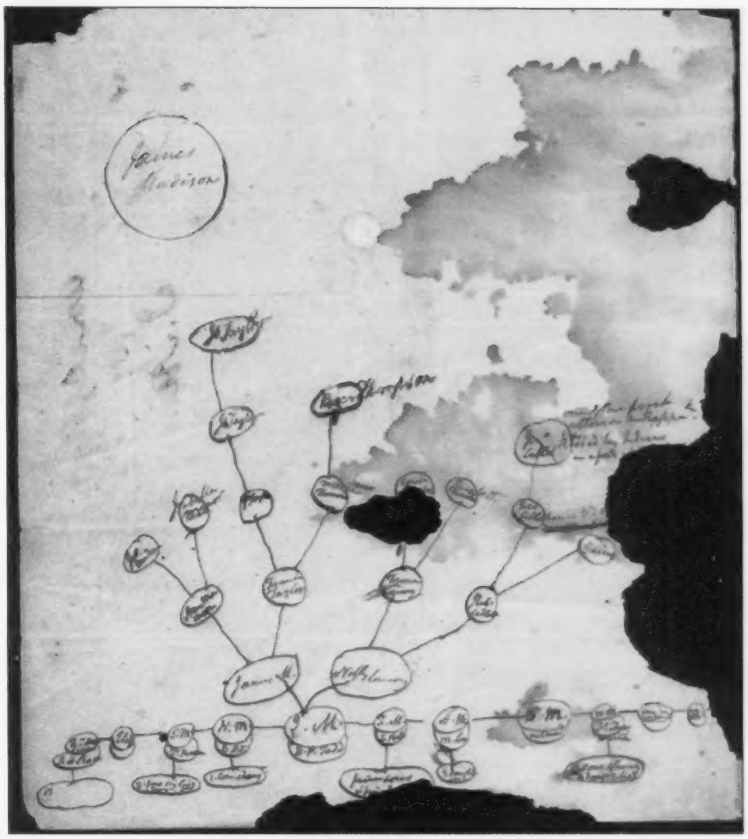
The James Madison Papers collection, which is in the custody of the Library's Manuscript Division, consists of approximately 12,000 items that document the life of the man who came to be known as the "Father of the Constitution."

It comprises correspondence, personal notes, drafts of letters and legislation, an autobiography, legal and financial documents and miscellaneous manuscripts.

The collection is organized into six series dating from 1723 to 1836. Beginning with Madison's days as a student, the materials cover his years as a member of the Virginia House of Delegates and include extensive notes of the debates during his three-year term in the Continental Congress (1779-82). Notes and memorandums document Madison's pivotal role in the Constitutional Convention of 1787 and the Virginia ratification convention of 1788.

Other materials reflect the nine years that Madison spent in the U.S. House of Representatives and his tenure as secretary of state during Thomas Jefferson's presidency. Correspondence and notes trace his two terms as the fourth president of the United States, illuminating the origins and course of the War of 1812 and the postwar years of his presidency and subsequent retirement.

The collection also includes a copy of Thomas Jefferson's notes from the Continental Congress of 1776, including Jefferson's personal copy of the Declaration of Independence as amended by Congress. Notable correspondents include Dolley Payne Madison, Thomas Jefferson, James Monroe, Alexander Hamilton, George Washington, Edmund Randolph, Noah Webster and Secretary of War James Armstrong, whose correspondence with Madison fills an entire series.

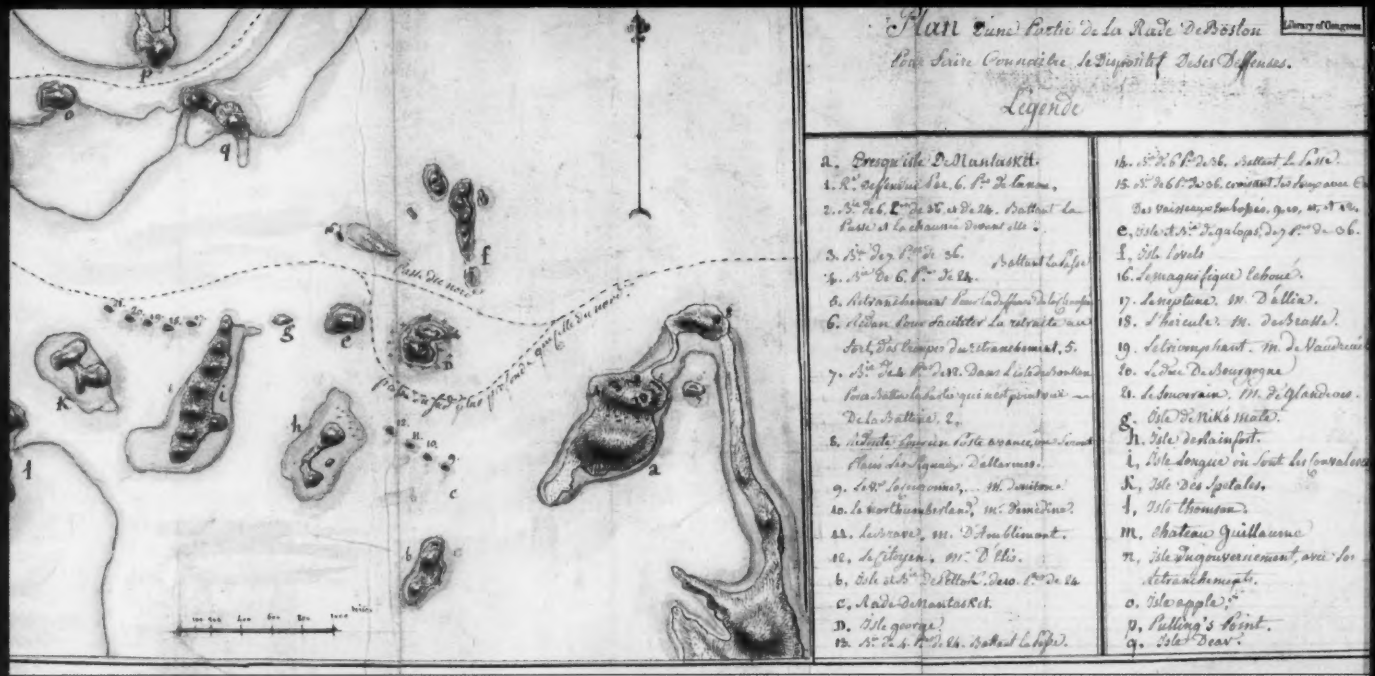


James Madison prepared this family tree in his own hand sometime between 1813 and 1819, either during or after his term as president.

The online version of Madison's papers includes an essay on "James Madison's Ciphers." Madison, as a Virginia delegate to the Continental Congress, while he was secretary of state and in his personal correspondence with Jefferson, constantly feared that unauthorized people would seek to read his private and public correspondence. To deter such intrusions, he resorted to using a variety of codes and ciphers in the letters that he wrote.

Another essay recounts Madison's experiences during the Constitutional Convention of 1787. Although Madison believed that individual rights were fully protected by the Constitution without amendment, he also recognized that including a Bill of Rights as part of the nation's founding document was politically imperative. His "Notes for a Speech in Congress," June 8, 1789, highlights the arguments he used as a leader in the First Federal Congress to push 12 amendments to the Constitution through that body in its first year. Ten of these amendments were ratified by the states and have been enshrined as the Bill of Rights.

"The James Madison Papers" online presentation complements other online presidential papers from the Library of Congress, also available through American Memory: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln. ◆



This French map of Boston Harbor from 1778 showed placement of defenses, including vessels of the French fleet by name and commander. The French were American allies during the Revolutionary War.

Global Gateway Expands

Library of Congress and National Library of France Launch Joint Web Site

The Library of Congress and the National Library of France (Bibliothèque nationale de France) have launched a bilingual (English-French) online presentation that explores the history of the French presence in North America and the interactions between the French and American peoples from the early 16th to the early 19th centuries. The Web site was unveiled in Paris on May 10 at a ceremony attended by Jean-Noël Jeanneney, president of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, and John Van Oudenaren, chief of the Library's European Division and director of its Global Gateway initiative.

"We are pleased to cooperate with other national libraries to make these rich historical resources globally accessible," said Librarian of Congress James H. Billington. "This site will be especially valuable for teachers as they prepare lessons on this complex and pivotal chapter in American and French history."

"In developing this Web presentation, both national libraries have done what they do best—sift through an exhaustive amount of material in order to make our common histories comprehensible and accessible to the public," said Jeanneney.

The online English presentation, titled "France in America," joins other world history resources on the Library of Congress Global Gateway Web site as part of the "Collaborative Digital Libraries" section, at **http://international.loc.gov**. The site features the extraordinary international collections of the Library of Congress as well as those of its partners from libraries in Brazil, Spain, the Netherlands and Russia—and now France.

The French version, titled "La France en Amérique," is the newest addition to Gallica, the Bibliothèque nationale de France's digital library, at **http://gallica.bnf.fr/franceamerique/**.

The English and French presentations each include more than 100,000 images from the rare book, manuscript, map and print collections of the Library of Congress and the Bibliothèque nationale de France. Among the items available on the site are print versions of Samuel de Champlain's "Voyages," Jacques Marquette's account of his voyage of 1673, Theodor de Bry's late 16th century illustrations of Native American villages, narratives by French officers who participated in the American Revolution and rare maps from the Rochambeau Collection in the Library of Congress and the d'Anville Collection in the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

The first release of the online presentation focuses on the role played by France in the exploration and settlement of North America and in such formative events in the history of the United States as the French and Indian War, the American Revolution and the Louisiana Purchase. It documents the voyages of important explorers such as Jacques Cartier, Champlain and Sieur Cavelier de La Salle; the role of French fur traders, missionaries and soldiers in opening up and settling the upper Midwest; and the interactions between the French settlers and the Native American tribes they encountered.

A second release, to be launched in 2006, will document the continuing links between France and the United States in the 19th century through trade, immigration, scientific exchange, literature and the arts.

The Bibliothèque nationale de France was founded (as

the first Royal Library) by King Charles V in 1368. Through the mandatory deposit of printed works (since 1537) as well as numerous acquisitions and donations, the collection has grown to some 31 million documents, including books, manuscripts, prints, photographs, posters, maps, musical scores, sound recordings, video, multimedia, seals, coins and antiques. Today the Bibliothèque nationale de France serves visitors in its 35 reading rooms in five locations and through its Web site at **www.bnf.fr**.

Polish Declarations of Admiration and Friendship for the United States

A recent addition to the "Individual Digital Collections" on the Global Gateway Web site is "Polish Declarations of Admiration and Friendship for the United States," a presentation of selected manuscript volumes from the Library of Congress Manuscript Division, which can be accessed on the Web at **http://international.loc.gov/intldl/pldechtml/**.

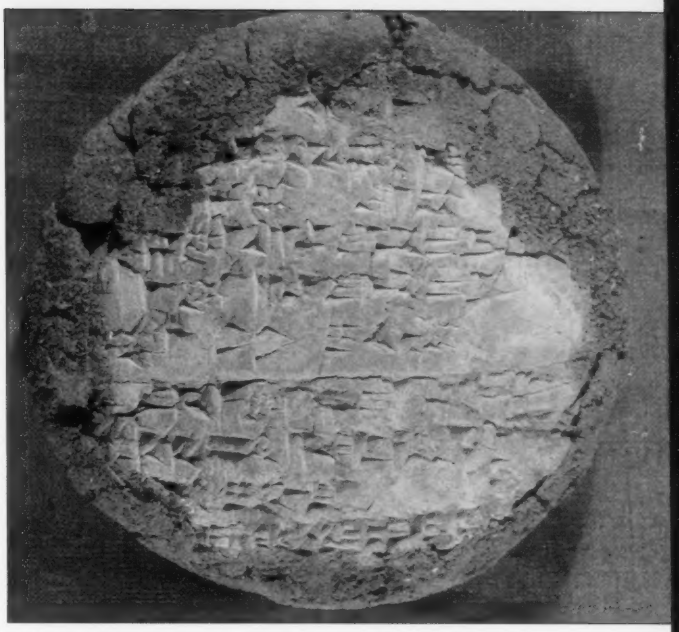
The "Digital Collections" section provides links to thematic presentations, including "Puerto Rico at the Dawn of the Modern Age," "The Spanish-American War in Motion Pictures" and the extraordinary "Prokudin-Gorskii Collection" of color photographs of Russia taken just before the 1917 revolution.

"Polish Declarations" offers the first 13 volumes of a larger collection of 111 volumes compiled in Poland in 1926 and delivered to President Calvin Coolidge at the White House to honor the 150th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Richly illustrated with original works by prominent Polish graphic artists, the collection includes the greetings and signatures of national, provincial and local government officials; representatives of religious, social, business, academic and military institutions; and approximately 5.5 million schoolchildren.

At President Coolidge's behest, this unique gift was transferred to the Library of Congress, where it remained largely unused for some seven decades. In 1996 the collection was "rediscovered" serendipitously during the visit of Polish first lady Jolanta Kwasniewska and other dignitaries from the Embassy of Poland. The collection generated such intense interest that the Library, in cooperation with the Embassy of Poland, organized a special program on May 2, 1997, to showcase this symbol of the enduring friendship between Poland and the United States.

More than an impressive artifact, the collection is an important, largely unexplored primary source for genealogical, historical and sociological research, for it includes the signatures of nearly one-sixth of the population of Poland as it existed in 1926.

This searchable online presentation is a complete facsimile of the six oversized presentation volumes and the seven volumes of secondary school signatures. With the exception of famous people after whom institutions are named, such as the Maria Konopnicka Municipal Gimnazjum in Leszno or the Queen Jadwiga State Gimnazjum in Pabianice, personal names are not searchable. However, researchers are now able to search by keyword (English or Polish without diacritics) and locate information about particular villages, cities, districts, provinces, institutions or organizations.



This fragment of a larger clay cuneiform tablet from Sumeria, ca. 2200-1900 B.C., is a receipt of some kind that mentions amounts of land or silver with interest.

Cuneiform Tablets

The ancient form of pictographic writing known as cuneiform is the subject of another recent Web presentation, which showcases these 4,000-year-old materials from the Library's collections. "Cuneiform Tablets: From the Reign of Gudea of Lagash to Shalmanassar III" can be seen on the Library's Global Gateway Web site at **http://international.loc.gov/intldl/cuneihtml/**. The materials are housed in the Library's African and Middle Eastern Division.

"Cuneiform Tablets" includes 38 items—mostly clay tablets, but also several brick fragments and two clay cones. The oldest tablets date from the reign of Gudea of Lagash (2144-2124 B.C.). These tablets contain the earliest examples of writing held in the Library of Congress.

The Sumerians first developed cuneiform as a writing system, using reeds to make impressions in clay. The tip of a reed stylus was impressed into a wet clay surface to draw the strokes of the pictograph, thus acquiring a wedge-shaped appearance. The clay [or brick] was then either baked in a kiln or dried by the sun. The word cuneiform is derived from Latin— cuneus, for wedge, and forma, meaning shape.

The cuneiform tablets in this online presentation served various purposes. Twenty-two tablets contain inscriptions pertaining primarily to the receipt of and payment for goods and services; they were essentially accounting records. Twelve tablets are school exercise tablets, used by scribes learning the cuneiform writing system.

The Library of Congress acquired its collection of cuneiform materials in 1929 from Kirkor Minassian, an art dealer. These materials were part of his collection of Islamic bookbindings, manuscripts, textiles and ceramic and metal objects illustrating the history of the development of writing and book arts in the Middle East. ◆

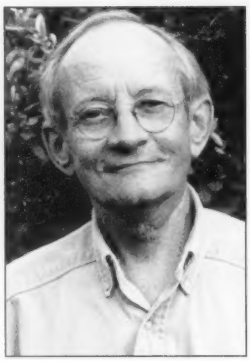
Encore, Encore!

Poet Laureate Ted Kooser Appointed to Second Term

By DONNA URSCHEL

Ted Kooser, winner of the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for poetry, has been appointed by the Librarian of Congress James Billington to serve a second term as Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry.

"We are delighted that Ted Kooser has agreed to serve a second year," said Billington. "His dedication and initiatives are already attracting new audiences to poetry."



Ted Kooser

Kooser, who looks forward to serving a second term, said, "This past year, I have immensely enjoyed connecting with people all over the country and talking to them about reading and writing poetry." To conclude his first term, Kooser delivered a lecture at the Library on May 5 (see story on page 121).

In April Kooser received the Pulitzer Prize for his book "Delights & Shadows" (Copper Canyon, 2004). The poet laureate said he had not expected to win a Pulitzer. "I was idly reading e-mails and found one from a woman in the public relations department of the University of Nebraska, saying she needed a quote from me about winning the Pulitzer. That was the first I'd heard of it. I was flabbergasted. I thought that being appointed poet laureate was a miracle, and now this!"

Kooser Promotes Poetry in Newspapers

During his first term as poet laureate, Kooser, with the support of the Poetry Foundation, inaugurated the program "American Life in Poetry" (**www.americanlifeinpoetry.org**), which offers a free weekly column to local newspapers around the country. He plans to continue the column in his second term.

Each 6- to 8-inch column features a brief poem by a contemporary American poet and a sentence or two of introduction by Kooser. This initiative offers the chance for poets to reach tens of thousands of readers. Outlets interested in receiving the weekly column should register for free delivery at **www.americanlifeinpoetry.org**.

"Newspapers are close to my heart and my family," said Kooser, whose wife and son both work in journalism. "As poet laureate, I want to show the people who read newspapers that poetry can be for them, can give them a smile or an insight."

Poetry was long a popular staple in the daily press. According to Kooser, "Readers enjoyed it. They would clip verses, stick them in their diaries and enclose them in letters. They even took time to memorize some of the poems they discovered."

In recent years, poetry has all but disappeared from newsprint. Yet the attraction to it is still strong. Kooser said, "Poetry has remained a perennial expression of our emotional, spiritual and intellectual lives, as witnessed by the tens of thousands of poems written about the tragedy of Sept. 11 that circulated on the Internet. Now I'm hoping to convince editors that there could be a small place in their papers for poetry, that poetry could add a spot of value in the eyes of readers. Best of all, it won't cost a penny."

John Barr, president of the Chicago-based Poetry Foundation, an independent literary organization, said, "It is an honor to be allied with the Library of Congress. Through the office of the Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry, the Library has done much to celebrate the best poetry and enlarge its audience. We are natural partners in the American Life in Poetry project, which will help get good poetry back into the mainstream."

Born in Ames, Iowa, in 1939, Kooser earned his bachelor's degree at Iowa State University in 1962 and his master's at the University of Nebraska in 1968. His other collections of poetry include "Sure Signs" (1980), which received the Society of Midland Authors Prize for the best book of poetry by a Midwestern writer published in that year; "One World at a Time" (1985); "Weather Central" (1994); and "Winter Morning Walks: One Hundred Postcards to Jim Harrison" (2000), winner of the 2001 Nebraska Book Award for Poetry.

"I was idly reading e-mails and found one... saying she needed a quote from me about winning the Pulitzer. That was the first I'd heard of it ..." —*Ted Kooser*

A book of his essays, "Local Wonders: Seasons in the Bohemian Alps" (2002), won the Nebraska Book Award for Nonfiction in 2003 and third place in the Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers Award in Nonfiction for 2002. Friends of American Writers selected "Local Wonders" as the best book written by a Midwestern writer for 2002, and the book also won ForeWord Magazine's Book of the Year Award for autobiography. Kooser is the author, with his longtime friend Jim Harrison, of "Braided Creek: A Conversation in Poetry" (2003).

Among Kooser's other awards and honors are two National Endowment for the Arts fellowships, the Pushcart Prize, the Stanley Kunitz Prize, the James Boatwright Prize and a merit award from the Nebraska Arts Council. He is editor and publisher of Windflower Press, a small press specializing in contemporary poetry. He teaches as a visiting professor in the Department of English at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. ◆

Donna Urschel is a public affairs specialist in the Library's Public Affairs Office.

'Nothing Ordinary About a Raindrop'

Ted Kooser on Appreciating Everyday Things

By DONNA URSCHEL

Everyday things—droplets of rain, the chatter of secretaries, an artichoke, a leaky faucet —became the subjects of discovery and beauty as Kooser read poems about them before an overflowing crowd in early May. His lecture "Out of the Ordinary" marked the end of the Library's 2004-2005 literary season and his first term as Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry. Kooser talked about writing poems and how he tries to find beauty in the commonplace, making the ordinary into something extraordinary.

"Ted's a wise and modest man," said Prosser Gifford, head of the Office of Scholarly Programs, when he introduced Kooser. "Perhaps dealing with medical risks in the insurance business for a number of years made him aware of human frailty and also gave him a deeper appreciation of the small gestures and memorable moments in everyday life that his poems celebrate."

Kooser started the lecture by comparing a teleidoscope and a poem. Both do similar things. When a teleidoscope, similar to a kaleidoscope, is focused on an object, a beautiful array of colors and textures appears.

"A teleidoscope's charm is that it can make the ordinary look extraordinary. We like that. We rejoice a little when someone shows us something special about our ordinary lives. That goes for poems, too," he said.

Kooser didn't always see the beauty in things. In the mid 1960s, he was a young man employed at Bankers Life Nebraska, a life insurance company. "Bankers Life seemed a stern, humdrum, conservative place," Kooser said, "and it was at that time I wrote the following poem: 'They Had Torn Off My Face at the Office.'" Kooser read the poem and another one he wrote at the time, "A Death at the Office."

"Cold, hard poems," he said. "Bankers Life was that kind of place, or so it seemed to a poet still in his 20s, wondering how he had wound up behind a gray metal desk, wearing a necktie, answering letters about policy loans, beneficiaries and bounced premium checks."

Then one day, at the suggestion of a Bankers Life management consultant, the insurance company brought in Reinhold Marxhausen, a photographer, to cheer up the employees. "Marxhausen was a delightful man, playful yet serious about art and its happy effects," Kooser said. The photographer spent several weeks taking pictures, 35mm color slides, of the workplace, capturing "the way light refracted from the chrome of a doorknob, the flowing shadows in curtained windows, and so on."

When he was finished, Marxhausen appeared before an assembly of employees in the cafeteria and showed the slides. "He showed us what was all around us, but what we had never stopped to notice," Kooser said.

"His slides were beautiful, rich with color and mass and texture. Who would have thought, for example, that the arc of water in a common drinking fountain could be so beautiful? We left our gray metal folding chairs feeling altogether happy and refreshed, as if sprinkled by a hose on a summer day. And we were a little in awe, looking about us to see what kinds of beauty we, too, might find right under our noses. What had we been missing every day?"

The slide show was a life-changing event for Kooser. He, too, started to pay attention to the details, "to the beauties and pleasures of the ordinary." Kooser read two poems that demonstrated the change: "At the Office Early" describes how he sees in raindrops the upside down reflections of a nearby bank—

> "… a thousand banks
> turned over, the change
> crashing out of the drawers
> and bouncing upstairs
> to the roof, the soft
> percussion of ferns
> dropping out of their pots,
> the ball-point pens
> popping out of their sockets
> in a fluffy snow
> of deposit slips …"

The second poem was "Four Secretaries," which describes the supportive relationships among four young women. Kooser said he liked these poems much better than ones about the coldness of office life.

He also read a one-line poem by Joseph Hutchison called "Artichoke":

> "O heart weighed down by so many wings."

Kooser asked "With that poem in your head, could you ever see a bin full of artichokes in quite the same way?"

He read poems about potatoes and one about a spiral notebook, all about making the ordinary into the extraordinary.

About 10 years ago, Kooser was asked to write a poem to accompany a painting for an art book, which was never published. (Kooser later used a picture of that George Ault painting on the cover of "Delights & Shadows.") The poem that Kooser proposed was:

> "If you can awaken
> inside the familiar
> and discover it strange,
> you need never leave home."

"This four-line poem is a kind of credo for me," Kooser told the audience. "In short, we have beauty all about us, if we take the time to pay attention to it. Reinhold Marxhausen knew about paying attention; George Ault knew it. Pablo Neruda wrote dozens of remarkable poems about common things. Thousands of poets and painters have learned to pay attention like this. We honor the ordinary by giving it our attention. We enshrine the ordinary in our art. Is there anything really ordinary, I wonder." ◆

Donna Urschel is a public affairs specialist in the Library's Public Affairs Office.

Growing Up in Kansas

B.H. Fairchild Accepts Bobbitt Poetry Prize

By DONNA URSCHEL

When B.H. (Pete) Fairchild received the 2004 Rebekah Johnson Bobbitt National Prize for Poetry at the Library of Congress in late April, he read from his award-winning book, transporting the audience to the Kansas of his youth, a land occupied by hardworking stoic men and bored teenage boys who roll their speeding cars for kicks.

Several autobiographical narrative poems are included in "Early Occult Memory Systems of the Lower Midwest," published in 2003 by W.W. Norton, which is the eighth book to win the Bobbitt prize. The $10,000 prize recognizes the most distinguished book of poetry written by an American and published during the preceding two years.

At the event, Poet Laureate Ted Kooser introduced Fairchild, who goes by Pete instead of B.H. "I feel just a little proprietary about Pete Fairchild's poems, since much of their experience has been informed and seasoned by the same, enormous, open landscape from which I hail," Kooser said.

He continued, "That word, 'hail,' perfectly befits those vast plains because, though a 'hi' or a 'hello' is for people close up, a hail is a hello from a long way off. … I like to think that in a thousand little sun-baked, gray towns across the great plains, lots of people are out in their gardens right now, trying to get the spinach in before it gets dark, but just now pausing to raise their hands to hail Pete Fairchild, hailing him from Texas and Kansas and Oklahoma, the Dakotas and my own Nebraska, wishing him well … because his poetry honors their lives, their landscape and their history."

Fairchild started his reading with the book's title poem, "Early Occult Memory Systems of the Lower Midwest," in which a 5-year-old boy remembers accompanying his dad, an oil field laborer, out to the plains to a stalled oil rig. He also read the poem "Delivering Eggs to the Girls' Dorm," about love and yearning and loneliness. During his graduate school days, Fairchild held a job delivering eggs to the freshmen girls' dorm.

Fairchild then turned to a long, vivid poem, "Rave On," which tells the gripping story of four teens, based on Fairchild and his three friends, who get a cheap car from Roman's Salvage, fix it up with some spare parts and then speed it wildly down the road in order to flip it over and try to survive the ordeal, to "go in a boy and come out a man."

" … Coming up
out of the long tunnel of cottonwoods that open onto
Johnson Road, Travis with his foot stuck deep into the
soul
of that old Ford come on, Bubba, come on beating
the dash with his fist, hair flaming back in the wind
and eyes lit up by some fire in his head that I
had never seen. …
… I think we were butt-deep in regret and a rush
of remembering whatever we would leave behind—
Samantha Dobbins smelling like fresh laundry,
light from the movie spilling down her long blonde hair,
trout leaping all silver and pink from Black Bear Creek,
the hand of my mother, I confess, passing gentle
across my face at night when I was a child—oh, yes,
it was all good now and too late, too late, trees blurring
past and Travis wild, popping the wheel, oh too late
too late. …"

They survived. Only one suffered any injuries, a broken arm. They grow up and, as Fairchild said, "become, at last, our fathers."

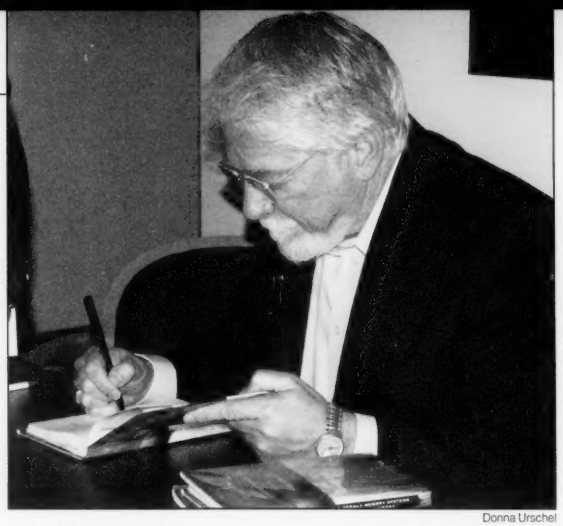
He also read the poems "Mlle Pym," "A Photograph of the Titanic," "At Omaha Beach" and "At the Café de Flore."

Fairchild ended the reading with "Beauty," a poem from an earlier book, "The Art of the Lathe." The long biographical narrative focuses on Fairchild's realization that the stoic men of his hometown, "men who knew the true meaning of labor and money and other hard, true things and did not, did not ever, use the word, 'beauty'."

Also at the reading, benefactor Philip Bobbitt spoke briefly about the prize, which is given in the memory of his late mother, Rebekah Johnson Bobbitt of Austin, Texas, the sister of President Lyndon B. Johnson. Bobbitt pointed out that the prize, given every other year, is 16 years old this year, "sweet 16," with a bright future ahead.

The winner of the Bobbitt Prize is chosen by a three-member jury appointed by a selection committee composed of the Librarian of Congress, the Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry, a publisher named by the Academy of American Poets and a literary critic nominated by the Bobbitt family. The jury for this year's prize was Clarence Brown, R.S. Gwynn and Ed Ochester.

Fairchild grew up in small towns in Texas, Oklahoma and southwest Kansas. He earned bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Kansas, and a doctorate from the University of Tulsa. He is a recipient of Guggenheim, Rockefeller/Bellagio and National Endowment for the Arts fellowships. He recently received the Arthur Rense Poetry Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He now lives in California. ◆



Donna Urschel

B.H. "Pete" Fairchild signs copies of his collection after his poetry reading at the Library of Congress.

Donna Urschel is a public affairs specialist in the Library's Public Affairs Office.

A Poet's Hall of Fame

Past Witter Bynner Fellows Celebrate Awards Program

By DONNA URSCHEL

Trees with blue blossoms, estate sales, life as a sales clerk and 40 years of life in a three-story tenement were some of the topics of poems read by 11 noted poets—all past Witter Bynner Fellowship Award winners—at the Library of Congress on April 18 in an evening of poetry readings and reminiscences.

The poets gathered, before an enthusiastic audience in the Coolidge Auditorium, to celebrate the Witter Bynner Foundation's generosity to the awards program. Each year the foundation provides funds to the Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry, who, in conjunction with the Library, makes monetary awards to two emerging poets to support their writing. The program started in 1998.

After introductions by Steven Schwartz, the executive secretary of the Witter Bynner Foundation, and Poet Laureate Ted Kooser, the poets read in two sessions. The first, from 5 to 6:30 p.m., featured Carol Muske-Dukes, Carl Phillips, David Gewanter, Campbell McGrath and Joshua Weiner. The second reading, from 8 to 9:30, featured George Bilgere, Major Jackson, Rebecca Wee, Spencer Reece, Claudia Emerson and Martin Walls.

"I'd like to thank the recipients who choose to be poets and who persevere. Thank you for embracing your life and your passion," said Schwartz.

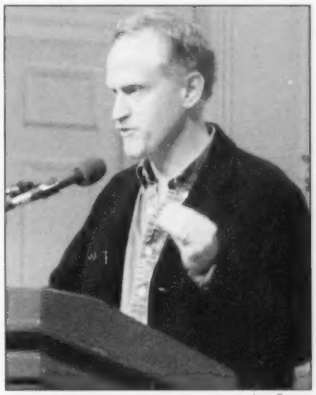
At the conclusion of the evening, Prosser Gifford, head of the Office of Scholarly Programs, said, "It's interesting how in 12 minutes each, you could get a sense of the vibrant personality of each poet, whether he or she were grieving, driving, thinking about clouds or closets full of unwanted objects, or describing a pair of scissors."

Witter Bynner Foundation board members attended the celebration. In addition to Steven Schwartz, they included Douglas Schwartz, Bob Kurth, Janet McKay, Lara Morrow and Mark McDaniel. The foundation is based in Santa Fe, N.M. ◆

Donna Urschel is a public affairs specialist in the Library's Public Affairs Office.

Donna Urschel

Past Witter Bynner Fellowship Award winners gather during a break in the poetry readings in the Coolidge Auditorium April 18. The noted poets are, from left, George Bilgere, Carl Phillips, Major Jackson, Carol Muske-Dukes and Rebecca Wee.



Jane Sargus

Campbell McGrath, Witter Bynner Fellow from 1999, reads from his work.

Donna Urschel

Claudia Emerson and Martin Walls are the 2005 Witter Bynner Fellows in Poetry.

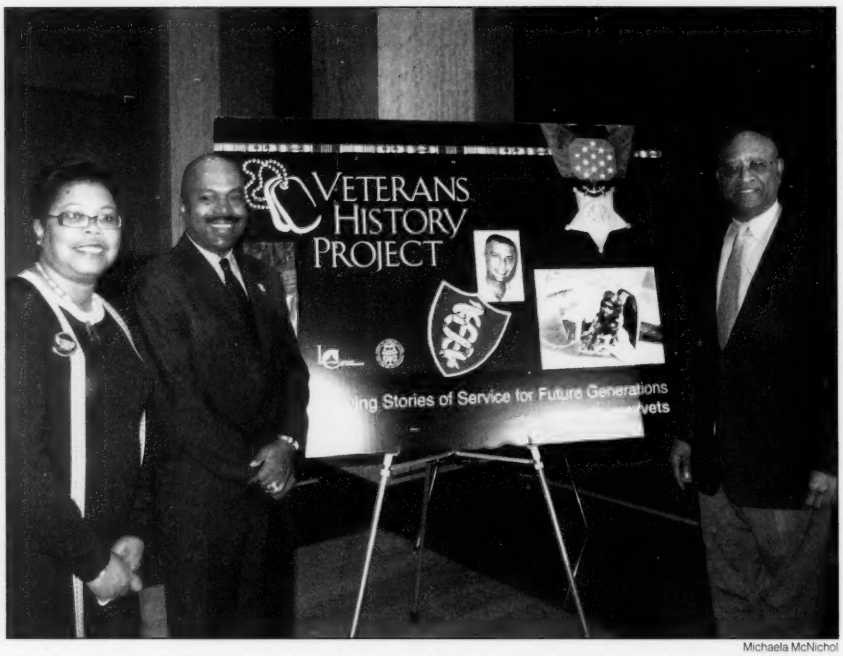
May Is 'Veterans History Project Month'

Proclamation Made by D.C. Mayor Anthony Williams

By AUDREY FISCHER

D.C. Mayor Anthony Williams issued a proclamation naming May 2005 "Veterans History Project Month," and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority donated public service advertising space on its bus and rail system to promote the Veterans History Project during the month. The mayor's proclamation and the design for the advertising campaign were unveiled at a ceremony held at the Library on April 29.

"This is an exciting and important time for our nation's veterans and the Veterans History Project," observed Diane Kresh, director of the project. "During this month, the nation will celebrate the 60th anniversary of VE/VJ Day, which marked the end of World War II, and the 30th anniversary of the fall of Saigon, marking the end of the Vietnam War. Commemorative events will bring thousands of veterans and their families to the nation's capital this month, and we want their stories."



Michaela McNichol

Debbie King of LYNX Bus Co., Kerwin Miller of the District's Office of Veterans Affairs and Deputy Librarian of Congress Donald Scott unveil the design for the public service advertising campaign.

"We believe a partnership with the city and its mass transportation system will assist us greatly in obtaining veterans' stories during these commemorative activities," said Debra Murphy, a program manager for the Veterans History Project.

"The District of Columbia is proud to lead the effort to promote this monumental project to honor our nation's veterans," said Kerwin Miller, director of the Mayor's Office of Veterans Affairs. Miller, a former officer in the U.S. Navy, was introduced as "the newest friend of the Veterans History Project," by project director Diane Kresh.

"I thank our local transportation officials for recognizing the importance of using our transportation system to educate our residents and visitors to our city of the need to have all veterans and their families participate in this project by interviewing local veterans and submitting these oral interviews to the Veterans History Project for preservation," said Miller, who challenged other state and city transportation agencies to promote the Veterans History Project during Veterans History Project Month.

Debbe King of the Marketing Department for LYNX Bus Co., the Central Florida Transit System, was the driving force behind the company's dedication of a fully painted bus honoring military men and women. The bus, which also promoted the Veterans History Project, toured the country for one year and made a stop at the Library last Veterans Day. At that time, King challenged the nation's capital to follow suit. For four consecutive years, King, who retired from the U.S. Navy, has come up with a theme to honor veterans on LYNX buses.

"My supervisor cringes when I say, 'I have an idea,'" joked King, who was presented with an award from the Library of Congress for her role as a "catalyst" in the public service advertising campaign. "She's concerned that it will cost money, but I tell her not to worry about that."

"When one person has an inspirational idea it reverberates, like dropping a pebble in a pond," observed retired Army Gen. Donald Scott, Deputy Librarian, who thanked King and the city's elected officials for "using their power and influence to declare the importance of military service."

"The LYNX Bus Company has provided extraordinary leadership and support to the Veterans History Project," said Murphy, as she presented a Certificate of Appreciation to King. "It not only donated the bus, but it also donated the design of the bus, which will be used in the Washington Metro campaign, and, hopefully, on bus and rail systems throughout the nation."

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Digitizing the Daily News

Library, NEH in Groundbreaking Program

The Library of Congress and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) recently announced that six institutions have received more than $1.9 million in grants in the National Digital Newspaper Program (NDNP), a new, long-term effort to develop an Internet-based, searchable database of U.S. newspapers now in the public domain.

Two-year projects in California, Florida, Kentucky, New York, Utah and Virginia each will digitize 100,000 or more pages of each state's most historically significant newspapers published between 1900 and 1910. When completed, digitized newspapers will be made available through the Library's Web site at **www.loc.gov**.

"The Library congratulates these institutions for taking a leading role in making newspapers—among our richest records of history—available electronically through our Web site," said Librarian of Congress James H. Billington. "We hope the National Digital Newspaper Program inspires other institutions to make their public domain newspapers accessible online."

The Library's own newspaper collections have grown to comprise more than 1 million current issues, more than 30,000 bound historical volumes and more than 600,000 microfilm reels.

"Newspapers are among the most important historical documents we have as Americans. They tell us who we were, who we are and where we're going," said NEH Chairman Bruce Cole. "Students, historians, lawyers, politicians—even newspaper reporters—will be able to go to their computer at home or at work and through a few keystrokes get immediate, unfiltered, access to the greatest source of our history. It will be available to the American public for free, forever."

As an outgrowth of the soon-to-be-completed U.S. Newspaper Program, a coordinated effort by individual states to inventory, catalog and selectively preserve on microfilm local newspapers, the NDNP will eventually support projects in all states and territories to select and digitize significant newspapers published between 1836 and 1922.

The following six institutions received the first NDNP grants to digitize papers in their respective states from the first decade of the 20th century: University of California, Riverside, $400,000; University of Florida Libraries, Gainesville, $320,959; University of Kentucky Research Foundation, Lexington, $310,000; New York Public Library, New York City, $351,500; University of Utah, Salt Lake City, $352,693; and Library of Virginia, Richmond, $201,226. ◆

VHP

continued from page 124

The design will appear inside 200 Metro buses, on the tail light of 20 buses, and on a display in five Metro rail stations throughout the Washington metropolitan area. To further extend the public service campaign, Murphy is working with the American Public Transit Association to promote the Veterans History Project on the nation's mass transit systems.

On hand for the event was a group of veterans, who were honored by Miller on behalf of the mayor for their distinguished military service. They included Marie Tucker, a former Navy WAVE (World War I), whose image appears on the bus design; Wesley A. Brown, a retired Navy Commander, who was the first African American graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy (class of 1949); James Pryde Sr., one of the original Tuskegee Airmen (World War II); and Ret. Army Col. Vance Shaw, who served in Vietnam. Also in attendance were representatives from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the office of Rep. Corinne Brown (D-Fla.), who represents the district where the LYNX Bus Co. is located.

Miller also acknowledged Yeiichi Kuwayama, a Japanese-American World War II veteran, who served in the Army's segregated (all Japanese-American) 442nd Regimental Combat team—the most decorated unit in history. Kuwayama received the Silver Star medal, the Purple Heart and the Croce de Guerra.

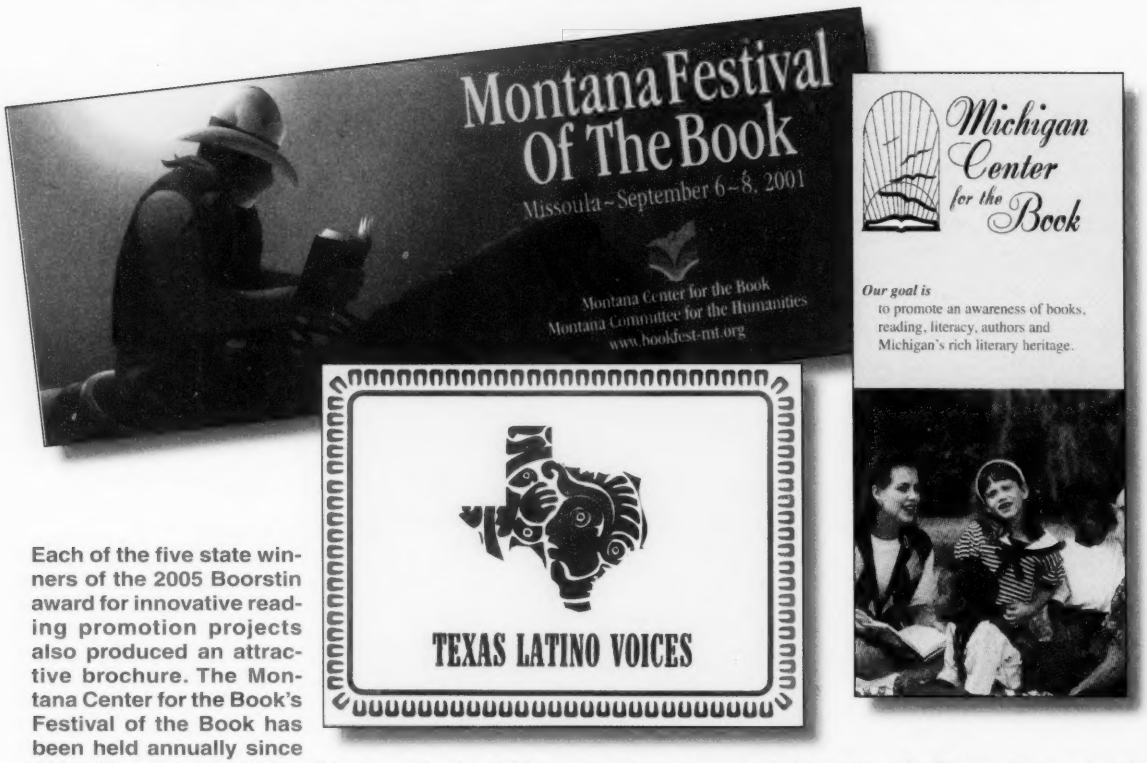
"Their military stories are compelling legacies that represent a great tradition of achievement and courage," said Miller. "During this campaign, we urge District residents to interview local veterans and submit those oral and written interviews to the Veterans History Project for preservation."

"I thank the Library of Congress for establishing the National Veterans History collection as a repository for all of the materials collected as part of the Veterans History Project," said Miller. I also thank the Veterans History Project staff, who will ensure that these military legacies are collected and maintained into perpetuity." ◆

Audrey Fischer is a public affairs specialist in the Library's Public Affairs Office.

News from the Center for the Book

State Centers Convene at Library


Montana Festival Of The Book
Missoula ~ September 6 ~ 8, 2001
Montana Center for the Book
Montana Committee for the Humanities
www.bookfest-mt.org
Michigan Center for the Book
Our goal is
to promote an awareness of books, reading, literacy, authors and Michigan's rich literary heritage.
TEXAS LATINO VOICES

Each of the five state winners of the 2005 Boorstin award for innovative reading promotion projects also produced an attractive brochure. The Montana Center for the Book's Festival of the Book has been held annually since 2000. "Texas Latino Voices" is a continuing bilingual author program initiated by the Texas Center for the Book. The Michigan Center for the Book was honored for its new statewide affiliates program.

By JOHN Y. COLE

More than 40 states were represented at the Center for the Book's annual "idea exchange" for affiliated state centers early this month, which featured discussions led by state center representatives and the center's annual Library Legislative Day reception. The approximately 150 people attending the reception, which was funded by the Center for the Book, included many state librarians, several of the newly appointed commissioners from the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, and American Library Association Executive Director Keith Michael Fiels, who joined this writer in welcoming attendees.

Idea exchange meetings were devoted to discussions about Reading Powers the Mind and Letters About Literature, two projects in which state centers are involved, and to an orientation for new and recent state center coordinators.

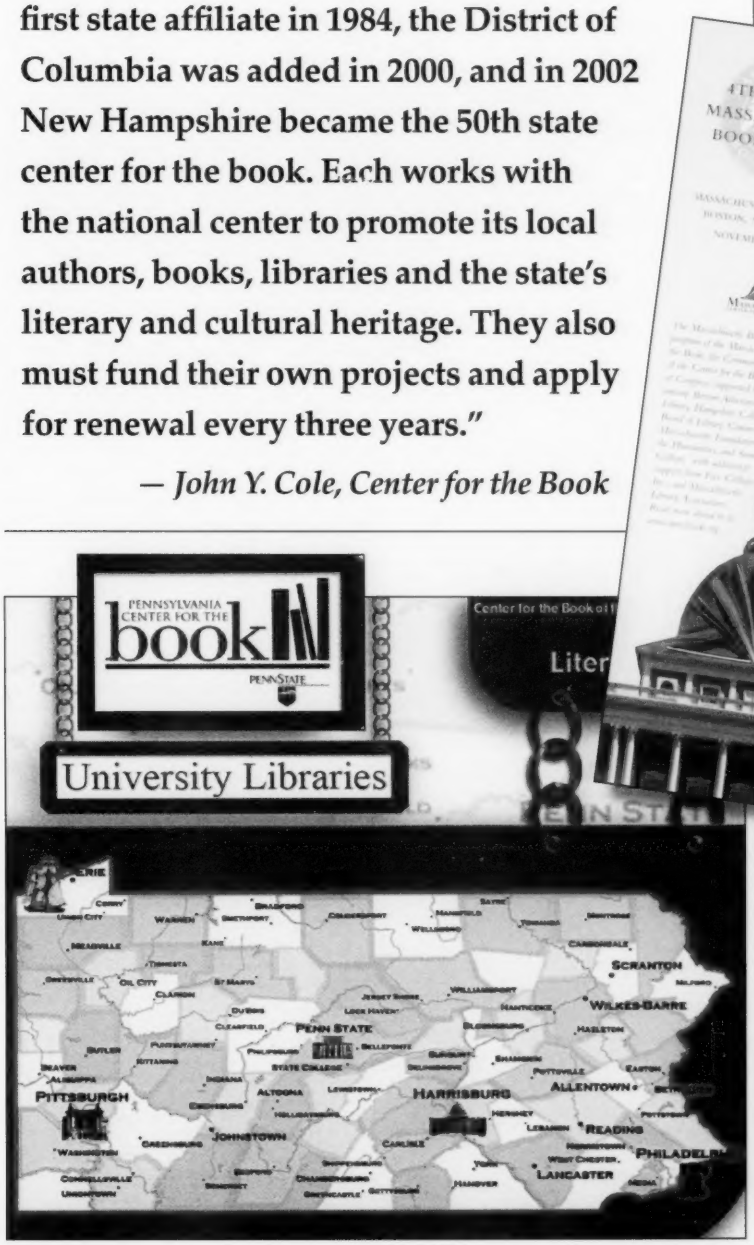
Because of the gradual but continued growth of state centers, many of the same topics are updated at each year's idea exchange. The major administrative subjects are membership, publicity, communication and fundraising (especially important because the national center and all 50 state centers are public-private partnerships) and Web site development. State center representatives exchange ideas on the Letters About Literature project (established in the early 1980s as the Books Change Lives project); state book awards (a late-1980s development); state literary maps (early 1990s); state book festivals (mid-1990s), communitywide ("One Book") reading initiatives (late 1990s); and, since 2002, the Pavilion of the States at the Library of Congress National Book Festival. Each year state center coordinators, many of them newly appointed, bring fresh approaches and ideas to share about these established initiatives.

Boorstin Awards

Ruth Boorstin, whose husband, Daniel J. Boorstin, former Librarian of Congress, established the Center for the Book in 1977, donated $5,000 earlier this year to encourage innovative reading promotion projects among the state centers. The projects were to be potential models for other affiliated state centers. At this year's meeting, five states each received $1,000 Boorstin Awards for their innovative projects. The states and the citations describing their accomplishments follow.

"State centers are an essential ingredient of the Center for the Book. Florida became the first state affiliate in 1984, the District of Columbia was added in 2000, and in 2002 New Hampshire became the 50th state center for the book. Each works with the national center to promote its local authors, books, libraries and the state's literary and cultural heritage. They also must fund their own projects and apply for renewal every three years."

— John Y. Cole, Center for the Book



The Pennsylvania Center for the Book's statewide literary map (http://pabook.libraries.psu.edu/litmap.html) is an online geographic guide to the state's authors. The Massachusetts Book Awards, an annual event started in 2001, is a key Massachusetts Center for the Book activity.

Massachusetts. The 2004 Massachusetts Book Awards ceremony, held at the state capitol in Boston, continues the Massachusetts center's effective use of statewide book awards as a year-round reading promotion activity that unites the "Massachusetts community of the book."

Michigan. The Michigan Center for the Book recently developed an innovative statewide affiliates program that has enlisted new partners, provided new income and greatly increased public awareness of the Michigan center and its activities.

Montana. The annual Montana Festival of the Book, started in 2000, successfully highlights the Montana Center for the Book's mission of promoting Montana literature, libraries and literacy. The Montana center is now a program of the Montana Committee for the Humanities, and the Boorstin award also recognizes the center's successful transition from the state library to the Lewis and Clark Public Library in Helena and most recently to the Montana Committee for the Humanities in Missoula.

Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania Center for the Book's innovative online Pennsylvania literary map (demonstrated at the May meeting) is wide-ranging in scope and historical depth. It is a rich resource for information about the literature, history and culture of the entire state and a possible model for other states.

Texas. The Texas Center for the Book is recognized for its energetic and innovative statewide author programming, particularly its new project, "Texas Latino Voices," a series of free presentations in Spanish and English by Texas Latino authors in public libraries throughout the state. ◆

John Y. Cole is director of the Center for the Book.

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